



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee**

February 23, 2011

**SB 930 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE AGE
HB 6326 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESPONSE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE
DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO REPORTS OF CHILD
ABUSE AND NEGLECT
HB 6325 AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE REENTRY AND EDUCATION
HB 6385 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR
CONCERNING EDUCATION**

CABE appreciates the fact that SB 930, An Act Concerning the School Entrance Age, while raising the age for children to enroll in school, preserves the opportunity for a board of education to enroll a child under 5 years of age. However, we are very concerned that this change in the entry age without a corresponding increase in access to early childhood programs for needy children, will have a detrimental impact on their educational opportunities. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not proceed with this change unless it is accompanied by expanded preschool resources.

While CABE supports the goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect in HB 6326, An Act Concerning the Response of School Districts and the Departments of Education and Children and Families to Report of Child Abuse and Neglect, we are concerned that several of these provisions will be difficult to implement at the local level. In section 1, we urge you to allow for a 30 day period for the completion for the check of the DCF child and abuse neglect registry just as is provided for the state and national criminal history record checks, in order to avoid a potential delay in filling a critical position.

CABE already provides a model mandated reporting policy called for in section 3, and will be happy to work with the Department of Children and Families in continuing to disseminate that information. We are also concerned about the time required for all school employees to complete the training program as well as refresher training course every 3 years, as required in section 4.

CABE opposes the provision in HB 6325, An Act Concerning Juvenile Reentry and Education, which would require the enrollment of a student who committed an expellable offense regardless of how long they had been detained in a juvenile detention center, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School or any other residential placement. This legislation could result in a student receiving a lesser punishment than provided in board policy.

HB 6385, An Act Concerning Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education. Given the economic challenges we face at all levels of government, CABE is pleased that the Governor's proposed budget maintains support for public education at existing levels. In particular, maintaining the education cost sharing grant, despite the termination of federal funding, is critical to maintaining local

education programs. Obviously, rising local costs coupled with level funding for ECS, transportation, bilingual education and special education will still present significant budget challenges in local communities.

CABE is also supportive of the provision in section 12 and 13 to provide additional resources to districts enrolling Open Choice students. The tied funding formula based upon participation will help the state meet the participation bench marks in the Sheff settlement agreement. The current grant of \$2,500 per pupil is clearly insufficient, given the average per pupil expenditure of \$13,600 in the region.

CABE strongly supports the provision in section 15 which continues the minimum budget requirement and thereby ensures that municipalities not reduce their education appropriation.

With respect to the proposed transfer of the regional technical school operations to either the board of education in these school districts or the Regional Educational Service Centers, we must express concern that resources be made available for the successful operation of these schools. A recent report by the superintendent of the technical high school system to the State Board of Education indicated significant issues with the physical condition of the facilities as well as with a lack of up-to-date equipment for the trades. Passing this burden on to school districts or RESCs without resources will not resolve the issue. In addition, the plan to have employees represented by two different unions seems unworkable.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.